

Lebert Lewin
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DDS Cuts

Thank you to the co-chairs, Senator Osten, Senator Formica, and Representative Walker, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. I am testifying today to urge the committee to reject the cuts that the Governor has proposed to DDS.

The Governor's budget largely relies on privatizing group homes, which would cause the layoff of public employees, and continues to underpay those of us in the private sector. This balances the budget on the backs of middle class workers and people with disabilities.

We all provide invaluable care to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The people who we take care of become family to us. 1199 represents workers in both the private and public sector, and clients need continuity of care in both. Workers in the private sector have a hard time making ends meet, and many of us work more than one job to be able to do this. There is also high staff turnover, which disrupts clients' lives. Workers in the public sector are uniquely trained and can help with currently unmet needs.

I am a private sector worker. I have worked for my company for sixteen years, and I only make \$12.26. Due to constant under funding, vital programs at my place of work have already been reduced. I used to be able to pick up extra hours doing recreation and respite work, but those services are dwindling away. We suffer from short staffing on a regular basis due to the high turnover, and this means that our clients suffer because we don't have the ability to provide them with the services they need and deserve. We cannot do all of what is expected of us if the funding isn't there.

I deserve a middle class living wage, as do all of us who work in this field. People with disabilities deserve to make a decision on how and where they receive services. Caregivers in both sectors deserve high quality training. The state cannot continue to look to us for sacrifices, we have sacrificed enough already.

This is not a good way to save money in the long term. Middle class jobs are good for the economy. Many of my co-workers have to rely on public assistance, or if they work more than one job, need services but are told they "make too much" to qualify. This still costs the state money. Keeping group home residents in their home that they have been in for most of their adult lives, with staff they have known as family, has been proven to prevent future medical issues. This budget should include additional monies for those of us in the private sector to allow us to make this a career. The obvious solution is to stop cutting DDS. I urge you to disregard the cuts requested in the Governor's budget and work with us going forward to find a way to help us provide the best care to our families.